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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 07 USNATO 000082

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SUBJECT: NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL READOUT - FEBRUARY 27, 2008

Classified By: A/DCM W.S. Reid III for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary from the NAC Meeting:

-- Afghanistan: SHAPE briefed on ISAF flood relief, and Ambassador Nuland urged quick work and additional resources to make flood relief a good news story at Bucharest. SHAPE described excellent cooperation between ISAF and ANSF resulting in a counter-IED success plus intelligence gains, as well as providing seamless security during the recent NAC trip. Germany announced a new "Provincial Advisory Team" in RC-North, and Canada highlighted the government's 2008-2009 budget.

-- Balkans: SHAPE reported KFOR has increased its presence and visibility in border and urban areas, particularly north of the Ibar River, and is well positioned to continue to support UNMIK as needed to ensure a safe and secure environment. SHAPE reported coordination with UNMIK had improved after some earlier difficulties but warned Kosovo Serbs are enacting a pre-coordinated plan aimed at achieving a soft-partition of northern Kosovo. Greece and Spain said KFOR needed to remain neutral and should not push back against soft partition, while the UK and U.S. urged a more robust response. Ambassador Nuland expressed concerns about creeping partition, noted UNMIK should restore the customs regime on the Northern border and called for stronger public diplomacy to highlight KFOR's efforts in maintaining security

and preventing ethnic violence. She also strongly rebutted Greek assertions that PM Thaci's rhetoric was escalatory.

-- Africa) Support to the AU: No discussion.

-- Iraq: The SYG noted LTG Dubik's positive NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) briefing to PermReps at Tuesday's SYG Coffee. Ambassador Nuland urged quick progress on a NAC decision on NTM-I, while the Italian PermRep reported on the successful carabinieri training effort.

-- Response to Terrorism: The Turkish PermRep briefed on Turkey's operations in Iraq, in which he said 153 terrorists have been captured or killed, and related his disappointment in the recent acquittal by a Belgian court of appeals of seven individuals believed by Turkey to be members of a terrorist group. Belgium replied that it was appealing the decision. Ambassador Nuland commented on U.S. concerns that Hezbollah could attempt an attack following the death of Hezbollah militant Mughniyeh in Syria.

-- Statements on Political Subjects: Slovenia lauded the performance of the SYG's representative at the recent meeting of EU defense ministers as providing valuable comments, and encouraged such cooperation between NATO and the EU in the future. Turkey applauded the Slovene initiative to invite a NATO representative for the meeting, noting the EU had not reciprocated NATO's flexibility in inviting senior EU officials to NATO meetings until this ministerial. Turkey provided a brief assessment of the recent parliamentary elections in Pakistan and requested that long-term relations

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with Pakistan be discussed in another NATO forum.

-- AOB: No discussion.

END SUMMARY.

Afghanistan

12. (C) SHAPE Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations MG Wright briefed that ISAF humanitarian operations were shifting from cold weather relief to flood relief, reporting that COMISAF had issued a warning order to prepare ISAF forces to cooperate with the Afghan government on flood relief. Medical Civil Affairs Patrols reached 3,000 Afghans last week.

13. (C) Wright reported that the Afghan Poppy Eradication Force has begun operations in Helmand. Three battle group-size operations are underway in Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan, with ISAF's theater task force deployed to Uruzgan in conjunction with Afghan National Security Forces. He praised cooperation between ANSF and ISAF's RC-Capital on security for the February 19-21 NAC visit to Afghanistan as a model for future joint activity. Citing another good news story on ISAF/ANSF cooperation against IEDs, he described how two off-duty policemen in Khost apprehended two individuals planting an IED and called in the ANA, which led to ISAF safely exploding the IED. One of the detained individuals was a known Taliban commander and IED facilitator, whose capture has led to significant intelligence gains.

14. (C) Looking at the intelligence highlights, Wright noted that threat reports of female suicide bombers in Kabul remain high and the potential for Opposing Militant Forces (OMF) to begin moving from Pakistan to Afghanistan. He cited the first complex attack of 2008 by OMF this past week, in which they used an IED followed by direct fire, in the Gulestan district of RC-West. Looking at ISAF's efforts to target OMF key leaders, he stressed that OMF were not homogeneous and thus strikes on leaders had different effects within different factions; however, intelligence over the past two

months has suggested the emergence of several rival OMF factions, and increasing stresses among senior leaders as they seek to deal with this factionalization. MG Wright stated that much of the OMF confidence from late 2006 has dissipated, and the OMF no longer seek to challenge ISAF for operational primacy. The ceasefire between militants and the Pakistani government continues in Pakistan's FATA, he said, and the Pakistani military is meanwhile strengthening its military position.

¶5. (C) In the follow-on discussion, Ambassador Nuland urged SHAPE and ISAF to come to the NAC quickly with any requests that could help facilitate the provision of flood relief. MG Wright noted that COMISAF intends to issue a Project Submission Requirement to replace at least seven Afghan bridges ruined by flooding and Ambassador Nuland asked for a

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copy for the NAC, citing the potential for a good news deliverable for Bucharest.

¶6. (C) German PermRep Brandenburg informed the Council that on February 23 a German "Provincial Advisory Team" opened in RC-North's Takhar province. This small team is co-led by officers from the Bundeswehr and MFA and, according to the German PermRep, will enable Germany to intensify its support to Takhar, which had been previously based out of PRT Kunduz.

¶7. (C) Canadian PermRep McRae followed up on Acting Senior Civilian Representative Jochems' written report of his meeting with Afghan Deputy NSA Tandor, who had expressed his desire for the development of a long-term strategic partnership with NATO, stating that Canada supports this and would like to see it addressed within the upcoming debate on an ISAF Comprehensive Political Military Strategic Plan. McRae also highlighted Canada's 2008-2009 budget that was tabled on February 26, noting development assistance for Afghanistan would be CAN \$280 million) making Afghanistan Canada's largest foreign aid recipient) and the government's commitment to a 20-year plan for building the capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Balkans

¶8. (C) The SYG reiterated the need to keep the security situation in Kosovo under close review. He pointed out the international community's continued call for moderation by all actors while striving for peace and long-term stability within the region. The SYG also reminded the Council that the first meeting of the International Steering Group (ISG) will take place February 28 in Vienna and will consist of representatives from France, Germany, Italy, the UK, US, the EU, and NATO, as well as several other countries who have recognized Kosovo. The ISG is expected to formally appoint current EU Special Representative to Kosovo Peter Feith as the International Civilian Representative for Kosovo, which will allow the establishment of an International Civilian Office under his responsibility. The SYG also announced that the EU and World Bank expect to host a technical meeting of donors for Kosovo in Brussels on March 5 focusing on Kosovo's medium-term financing needs and planning for a future donors' conference later in the year. NATO will attend the meeting as an observer. Lastly, the SYG raised the Russian PermRep's recent comments regarding NATO's future tasks as being in conflict with UNSCR 1244, noting that he, as the Chair of the NATO-Russia Council, planned to reiterate Allied points on Kosovo, but called on Allies to also respond.

¶9. (C) The CMC reported on KFOR's increased operational tempo since Kosovo's declaration of independence and said that recent events have validated previous decisions on reserve reinforcement and that mutually supporting efforts of the multi-national task forces have helped improve KFOR's

capability. He also reviewed timelines required for NATO's

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next steps and noted the importance of the Council making a decision soon on the Execution Directive for the implementation of the Bridging Document.

¶10. (C) General Wright gave a well-received briefing on the current operational situation in Kosovo, highlighting KFOR's current deployment posture region-wide, the low threat that currently exists against KFOR, and the current status of demonstrations and KFOR's responses. Noting that KFOR had increased its presence and visibility in the border and urban areas, particularly north of the Ibar River, he told the Council that KFOR is well positioned to continue to support and respond, as needed, to UNMIK in order to ensure a safe and secure environment. He also mentioned that COMKFOR is in constant communication with the Serbian CHOD. He particularly focused on the recent reinforcement of Multi-National Task Force North (MNTF-N) by the Italian ORF battalion. MNTF-N, which currently has a complement of 17 maneuver companies, seven of which are deployed in Mitrovica on both sides of the Ibar River, is deployed to monitor conditions and support UNMIK and the KPS. General Wright updated the Council on the status of COMKFOR's operational reserves, noting their increased readiness and that the German ORF battalion will begin deploying to Kosovo on March 15 in order to relieve the Italians. Looking to the future, General Wright sounded a note of warning that the Kosovo Serbs are in the process of enacting a seemingly pre-coordinated plan with Belgrade leading toward soft partition of the north. He emphasized, however, the importance for the international community, particularly UNMIK and later the EU, of working with all actors on the ground. Responding to Czech, German, and Belgium inquiries over the initial lack of good coordination between UNMIK and KFOR, General Wright acknowledged problems in the immediate aftermath of the declaration of independence, but assured the Council that coordination has improved, citing recent incidents this week that confirmed better communication between the two. In response to a question from Portugal, General Wright noted that so far the status of electrical power and supplies into Kosovo has remained unchanged.

¶11. (C) The UK noted the importance of the NAC approving the Executive Directive (echoed by all other PermReps who spoke) for KFOR's new tasks. The UK, echoed later by France, also stressed the importance of being clear that it is UNMIK that should take the lead in law enforcement, not undercutting the incoming European Union mission, and being prepared to provide a firm and robust response to soft partition at some point. He also supported sending a strong and clear signal to the Russian Ambassador regarding KFOR's role in the Balkans. Spain condemned the recent violence in Belgrade, but sounded a note of caution regarding any effort by KFOR to push back against soft partition, citing the December Ministerial guidance that called for KFOR to remain neutral and not to impose Pristina's authority. Spain added that briefings on SHAPE and Military Committee development of the resource and staffing implications of pursuing the new tasks was progressing in an orderly fashion and that Spain wanted a deliberate development of these issues before the NAC could

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be ready to take up any further political consideration of these "sensitive political issues." Italy also reflected on KFOR's evolving role, noting that there is concern (echoed by Estonia, the Netherlands and Belgium) about the transition period between UNMIK's drawdown and the EU mission's deployment which PermReps should continue to discuss. Italy said that Allies should not discuss the planning tasks with Russia in the NRC and should be cautious not to allow any one country to be the interpreter of UNSCR 1244. Greece took to task Kosovo Prime Minister Thaci's recent comments on NATO's

role in maintaining Kosovo's territorial integrity, saying that such comments only served to heighten the tensions and inquired as to the extent of Thaci's contacts with NATO authorities. Greece added that KFOR should not enforce Kosovo border posts and should remain neutral in such "political" questions. Ambassador Nuland, in rebuttal of Greece, echoed UK concerns over the creeping soft partition, noting that UNMIK should restore the customs regime in the north while not allowing the Serbs to ignore it. She pushed for a good public diplomacy message from NATO on events so far that highlighted KFOR's strong efforts to maintain security and the lack of ethnic violence. She also suggested as part of responding to Russia in the NRC that the NATO military authorities be available to provide a brief presentation on KFOR's posture in order to help deflect their arguments about NATO not doing enough to protect the Kosovo Serbs. (The SYG concurred and asked CMC to present such information, if asked, in the NRC.) Lastly, she pushed back strongly against the Greek insinuation that Thaci's comments heightened tensions, saying that it was unfair to criticize elected leaders who pledge to protect their sovereign territory. In response, the Greek PermRep acknowledged that while he understood Thaci's comments were made in a political context, he wanted to show his concern over any implication that somehow NATO is providing an Article 5-like guarantee.

Iraq

¶12. (C) The SYG opened his comments by saying that LTG Dubik gave a solid, positive briefing to PermReps on NTM-I yesterday. He continued by saying that the NAC will come back to NTM-I in the lead-up to PM Maliki's visit in April. Ambassador Nuland intervened to ask for a quick NAC decision in response to the letter from PM Maliki requesting NATO continue its role in training Iraqi security forces through ¶2009. She further requested that the CMC supply the tasked guidance and reach a decision within two weeks. The CMC responded that the Military Committee would prioritize its work on the matter. The SYG weighed in by asking the CMC to move as quickly as possible. Italian PermRep Stefanini reported on the carabinieri training, informing the NAC that the second class of 398 national police graduated on February ¶19. The third course is scheduled to begin on March 1 and, for the first time, will include Iraqis who were trained by NTM-I.

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Response to Terrorism

¶13. (C) Turkish PermRep Ildem reported that Turkey's cross border operation in Iraq was intended to ensure that northern Iraq is not used as a terrorist safe haven and is only targeting PKK camps. The current operation has extended 15 kilometers beyond the Turkey-Iraq border, and has resulted in 153 terrorists captured or killed, and the loss of just under 100 Turkish security forces. Ambassador Nuland noted that the U.S. has emphasized to Turkey the need to keep these operations of "limited duration and scope." She added that the U.S. was helping keep political dialogue channels between Ankara and Baghdad open, telling both the same message on the necessity of a limited duration and scope for the Turkish operation.

¶14. (C) The Turkish PermRep additionally related his disappointment in the recent acquittal by a Belgian court of appeals of seven individuals, believed by Turkey to be members of terrorist group DHKP-C. The Belgian PermRep said that his government had filed an official appeal regarding the ruling. Ambassador Nuland noted DHKP-C figured prominently on official U.S. terrorist groups lists and emphasized the need for Allied governments to tighten

internal laws and procedures to prevent terror groups from using Allied territory to plan and orchestrate attacks on NATO territory and elsewhere.

¶15. (S/NF) Ambassador Nuland commented on U.S. concerns that Hezbollah might attempt an attack following the death of leading Hezbollah figure Mughniyeh in Syria. She noted the group has responded in similar fashion to past attacks on its leadership. She emphasized that Allied security officials should be in a heightened state of awareness and encouraged Allies to cooperate as much as possible to help deter and address potential Hezbollah reprisal attacks.

Statements on Political Subjects

¶16. (C) Statements on Political Subjects: Slovenian PermRep Cerar remarked that the SYG representative at the recent meeting of EU defense ministers had provided valuable comments. He encouraged further such cooperation between NATO and the EU in the future.

¶17. (C) The Turkish PermRep provided a brief assessment of the recent parliamentary elections in Pakistan. Turkey agreed with the general conviction that the elections were free and transparent, and expected little dispute from the Pakistani military. Turkey considered the political landscape to have dramatically changed, with Musharraf's PMLQ party and religiously-inclined parties clear losers. Turkey expected the two leading parties to form a coalition, with which President Musharraf had indicated his willingness to cooperate. PermRep Ildem requested that this topic be discussed in another NATO forum, with the discussion aimed at

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long-term NATO-Pakistan relations, not just ISAF cooperation.
WEINROD